

DNREC's Division of Fish & Wildlife announces wild turkey hunters harvested 571 birds in 2018

DOVER – Delaware's month-long spring turkey season, which ended May 12, yielded 571 birds, 12.4 percent lower than last year's harvest of 652 birds, DNREC's Division of Fish & Wildlife announced today. Tough weather-related hunting conditions during the first and last week of the season appear to have contributed to the lower harvest this year. Delaware allows only the harvest of turkeys with beards – almost always males – during the spring season, the only time of year turkeys may be hunted in the state.

The four-week season breakdown was 237 birds harvested during the first week, 126 during the second week, 102 in the third week, and 90 in the final week. Sixteen birds were harvested by youth hunters during the special youth/non-ambulatory disabled hunt day held in early April.

Highlights of the 2018 season included the harvest of 28 “non-typical” turkeys, consisting of gobblers with more than one beard. Of birds with multiple beards, the majority (24) had two beards, three had three beards, and one had six beards. The longest-bearded bird had a 13-inch beard. The longest spurs on a harvested bird were $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches on the right leg and $1\frac{7}{8}$ inches on the left leg. The heaviest bird harvested weighed 25 lbs. 2 oz.

Turkeys were harvested in 17 of 18 wildlife management zones. A hot spot for harvest occurred in five zones stretching from zones 4, 6, 7, and 8 in western Kent County through zone 11 between Seaford and Georgetown in Sussex County, and accounted

for just under half of the total statewide harvest. Zone 1A, which is in New Castle County north of I-95/295, was the only zone where no birds were harvested.

This year, 83 percent of the turkeys were harvested on privately-owned lands. Hunters also were successful on 20 public land areas open for turkey hunting. With quality hunting opportunities available statewide on Division of Fish & Wildlife-managed state wildlife areas and Delaware Department of Agriculture-managed state forests, hunters bagged 95 birds, a decrease of 11 percent from 2017.

For hunters planning ahead, the 2019 wild turkey season will open Saturday, April 13 and run through Saturday, May 11, with the special youth and non-ambulatory disabled hunter day set for Saturday, April 6. Hunters should check the [2018/19 Delaware Hunting & Trapping Guide](#) for changes to the public land turkey lottery application process. Hunters are required to take a turkey hunter education class before hunting wild turkeys in Delaware. For more information, go to [Delaware Hunter Education Courses](#).

For more information on wild turkeys in Delaware, please contact Justyn Foth, waterfowl, turkey and upland gamebird biologist, Division of Fish & Wildlife, at 302-735-3600.

Follow the Division of Fish & Wildlife on Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/DelawareFishWildlife>.

Contact: Joanna Wilson, DNREC Public Affairs, 302-739-9902

Vol. 48, No. 178